

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2554

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 4676

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MILI, PN, PQ

SUBJECT: TREATY NEGOTIATIONS - LANDS AND WATERS: MILITARY
COORDINATION

REF: A. HINSON-BECKER TELECON 1630 6/28/77; B. BECKER-HINSON
TELECON 1000 6/29/77

SUMMARY: ON JUNE 28, PANAMANIAN TECHNICAL TEAM, AUGMENTED
BY LTC CONTRERAS OF NATIONAL GUARD GENERAL STAFF, REQUESTED
MEETING WITH U.S. TEAM 1030 JULY 5 TO PRESENT POSITION ON
MILITARY COORDINATION DECIDED BY TORRIJOS THIS WEEK. PANAMA
WILL PROPOSE ELIMINATION OF CERTAIN AREAS OF MILITARY COORD-
INATION FROM PRESENT U.S. POSITION. HOWEVER, PANAMANIAN
STRESSED TORRIJOS' WISH AND WILL TO SETTLE RAPIDLY ALONG
THESE LINES, AND SAID THEY WOULD BE AUTHORIZED TO ACCEPT
U.S. MAP IF MODIFICATIONS THEY WOULD PROPOSE WERE ACCEPTED.
THEY ALSO REQUESTED ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING SEVERAL VISITS
TO CANAL ZONE AREAS; AS AUTHORIZED REFTELECON B, EMBASSY
WILL DO THIS. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF MET WITH JAEN, VELASQUEZ AND ING. AUGUSTO
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ZAMBRANO OF PANAMANIAN LANDS AND WATERS TECHNICAL TEAM,
AT THEIR INITIATIVE, ON JUNE 28. THEY ASKED THAT EMBOFF
TRANSMIT TO US TEAM THEIR REQUEST FOR A MEETING AT
1030 TUESDAY, JULY 5, IN WASHINGTON. THEY EXPECTED
EDWIN FABREGA TO PARTICIPATE, AND HOPED GEN. DOLVIN
WOULD ALSO. THEIR SIDE WOULD ALSO INCLUDE ABOVE THREE,
CANO AND TWO NEW FACES: LTC ARMANDO CONTRERAS, G-3

OF NATIONAL GUARD GENERAL STAFF, AND LT. MOISES DEL RIO OF G-3 SECTION (THEY NOTED THAT SUCH PARTICIPATION OF A GENERAL STAFF MEMBER WAS UNPRECEDENTED TO DATE). SUBJECT WOULD BE MILITARY COORDINATION, BOTH USE REGIME FOR AREAS OF MILITARY COORDINATION AND THEIR DEFINITION ON MAP.

2. SINCE JUNE 23 COUNCIL OF LEGISLATION MEETING, PANAMANIANS HAD HELD A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH TORRIJOS, GENERAL STAFF AND CABINET MEMBERS TO DEVELOP AGREED GOP POSITION ON THESE ISSUES; CONTRERAS WOULD BE THE "BEARER" (PORTADOR) OF TORRIJOS' DECISIONS. IN REACHING THESE, TECHNICAL TEAM VIEWS HAD BEEN CONSIDERED BUT, THEY IMPLIED, NOT NECESSARILY ACCEPTED IN ALL CASES.

3. THEY STRESSED TORRIJOS' WISH AND WILL TO SETTLE ALONG THE LINES THEY WOULD PRESENT. CONTRERAS' PARTICIPATION WAS A DEFINITE SIGN OF GENERAL'S DESIRE, AS CONTRERAS WOULD BE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR PANAMA'S PARTICIPATION WITH US IN JOINT DEFENSE OF CANAL UNDER A NEW TREATY. TORRIJOS AND CONTRERAS INTENDED TO MAKE THIS PARTICIPATION REAL AND EFFECTIVE, NOT MERELY AN APPEARANCE--THEY PLANNED THAT US AND PANAMANIAN TROOPS SHOULD COOPERATE FULLY TOGETHER, USING FACILITIES ON A JOINT BASIS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.
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4. EMBOFF ASKED FOR OUTLINE OF TORRIJOS' DECISIONS AS PANAMANIAN UNDERSTOOD THEM. THEY SAID ONE OF FIRST POINTS CONTRERAS AND GENERAL STAFF MADE WAS THAT AREAS IN FT. AMADOR WHICH US PROPOSED FOR RETURN TO PANAMA WERE JUST TOO SMALL TO ACCOMMODATE SOME 800 TROOPS OF THE FIRST GN BATTALION, WHICH WOULD BE DEDICATED TO CANAL DEFENSE ROLE (THEY ASKED FOR APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF US TROOPS NOW AT AMADOR; EMBOFF SAID HE WOULD SEE IF INFORMATION COULD BE OBTAINED).

5. FOR THIS REASON, PANAMA WOULD PROPOSE THAT ALL ARMY AREAS OF AMADOR (THEY WERE NOT PRECISE ABOUT NAVAL STATION AREAS), TO INCLUDE HOUSING AND GOLF COURSE, REVERT TO PANAMA AT INCEPTION OF TREATY. FURTHER, PANAMA WOULD PROPOSE THAT ALL AREAS EAST OF ROAD FROM ALBROOK MAIN GATE TO CURUNDU EXCHANGE SERVICE STATION REVERT TO PANAMA AT INCEPTION OF TREATY, WITH EXCEPTION OF CURUNDU SCHOOLS WHICH WOULD BECOME AREAS OF MILITARY COORDINATION ALONG WITH OTHER SCHOOLS AND HOSPITAL. THIS WOULD INCLUDE CURUNDU AND CURUNDU HEIGHTS MILITARY HOUSING AREAS, CURUNDU ANTENNA FARM,

ALBROOK EAST-PAD AREA, RUNWAY, AND AREAS (PART OF DEFENSE SITE IN CURRENT US POSITION) WEST OF RUNWAY UP TO ROAD. THIS HAD A DOUBLE POINT. FIRST, CERTAIN INSTALLATIONS IN THIS AREA WOULD BE NEEDED BY NATIONAL GUARD TO SUPPLEMENT AMADOR IN JOINT DEFENSE OF CANAL. SECOND, AND MORE IMPORTANT, BOTH GN OFFICERS AND CIVILIANS AGREED THAT UNDUE MINGLING OF PANAMA CITY AND US MILITARY INSTALLATIONS--PARTICULARLY IN CASES WHERE US FLAG WOULD BE FLOWN (I.E., SCHOOLS AND HOSPITAL) UNDER CURRENT US POSITION--WOULD CREATE POTENTIAL FLASHPOINTS OF CONFLICT UNDER NEW TREATY THAT MUST BE AVOIDED. CURUNDU AREA, GIVEN ITS CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE "POLITICALLY EFFERVESCENT" UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA, WAS PARTICULARLY TROUBLESOME IN THIS RESPECT.
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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 SP-02 L-01 PM-03 SAB-01
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6. THEY SAID PANAMA WOULD STIPULATE THAT THESE AREAS BE RETURNED WITH ALL INSTALLATIONS IN OPERATING CONDITION. TORRIJOS HAD SEEN--AND WAS "FURIOUS" OVER--PHOTOGRAPHS OF CERTAIN BUILDINGS WHICH US APPEIER NNM BE DOMOLISHING RATHER THAN PERMIT THEIR RETURN TO PANAMA; THESE WERE ON QUARRY HEIGHTS MILITARY RESERVATION, ADJACENT TO FOURTH OF JULY AVENUE (EMBASSY WILL REPORT

FURTHER DETAILS WHEN OBTAINED FROM SOUTHCOM). THEY URGED STRONGLY THAT US TRY TO AVOID ANY FURTHER DEMOLITIONS FOR ANY REASON, AS TORRIJOS HAD APPEARED ABOUT READY TO CONCLUDE THAT US HAD ADOPTED A POLICY OF DEVASTATING ANY FACILITIES SCHEDULED FOR REVERSION TO PANAMA.

7. PANAMANIAN TEAM WOULD ALSO PROPOSE OTHER SLIGHT MODIFICATIONS IN US POSITION. THEY WERE INSTRUCTED TO REVERT TO US SEPTEMBER 1976 MAP PROPOSAL ON VERA CRUZ STRIP. THEY ALSO WISHED TO REDRAW EXTREME SOUTHWEST CORNER OF EMPIRE RANGE BOUNDARY TO PULL IT BACK AWAY FROM THATCHER HIGHWAY. THEY LEFT OPEN POSSIBILITY OF OTHER SUGGESTIONS. IN RETURN FOR US ACCEPTANCE OF THESE MODIFICATIONS, THEY SAID, THEY WOULD HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT US MAP AS SETTLEMENT ON LANDS AND WATERS ASPECT OF TREATY.

8. THEIR GROUP TENTATIVELY PLANS TO TRAVEL TO US ON MONDAY, JULY 4, SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION OF JULY 5 MEETING. PRIOR TO THIS, THEY REQUESTED THAT OBSERVATION VISITS (OR RE-VISITS) BE ARRANGED TO CERTAIN AREAS AS FOLLOWS: A) WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, CIVILIANS ONLY TO CURUNDU-ALBROOK AND AMADOR AREAS, ACCOMPANIED BY KNOWLEDGABLE REPRESENTATIVES OF SOUTHCOM; B) THURSDAY, JUNE 30, SAME GROUP TO BALBOA PORT INSTALLATIONS, ACCOMPANIED BY KNOWLEDGABLE REPRESENTATIVES OF PANCANAL; AND C) FRIDAY, JULY 1, THEY SAID, CONTRERAS WOULD COORDINATE A VISIT BY THE CIVILIANS PLUS HIMSELF AND DEL RIO TO VARIOUS ATLANTIC-SIDE AREAS, INCLUDING CIRSTOBAL, COCO SOLO, TELFERS ISLAND, GATUN, FT. GULICK, ETC. THEY EXPECTED CONTRERAS TO CONTACT US (PROBABLY MILGROUP) TO ARRANGE THIS. (AS OF 1000 JUNE 29, NEITHER EMBASSY NOR SOUTHCOM KNOW OF ANY INITIATIVE BY CONTRERAS.)

9. PER DEPT AUTHORIZATION REFTELCON B, EMBASSY WILL ARRANGE REQUESTED VISITS (A AND B ABOVE) WITH SOUTHCOM AND PANCANAL ON BEHALF OF US TECHNICAL TEAM. PANAMANIAN REQUESTED CONFIRMATION OF JULY 5 MEETING ASAP. AS INSTRUCTED REFTELCON B, EMBASSY ADVISED JUNE 29 JAEN THAT FABREGA SHOULD CONTACT GENERAL DOLVIN IN WASHINGTON. BUT WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE RECEIVING CONFIRMATION FOR GROUP HERE TO PERMIT THEM TO CONFIRM TRAVEL PLANS AND ARRANGEMENTS BY CONTRERAS AND DEL RIO.

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